

EXTERNAL Amnesty International

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AUSTRIA : THE ALLEGED ILL-TREATMENT OF EMAD FALTAS

The information on this case comes from articles published in the Vienna daily *Kurier* on 26 and 28 June and 6 July 1995, from medical reports and from an interview with the victim.

On the evening of Wednesday, 21 June 1995, Emad Faltas, a 36-year-old Egyptian was walking towards the Vienna railway station of Floridsdorf, when a woman asked him if she could walk with him and shelter under his umbrella as it was pouring down with rain. Inside the station they parted company. Almost immediately afterwards, four men attacked Emad Faltas. As it turned out later, the men were officers of the Vienna Drugs Squad and had been observing the scene for some time. They believed the woman in question to be a drugs dealer and had been tipped off that she would be meeting a contact near the station.

The policemen punched and kicked Emad Faltas in his ribs, shouting abuse at him. When he started crying out for help they strangled him and dragged him out of the station. Emad Faltas thought he was the victim of a racist attack and asked a newspaper vendor near the exit of the station for help. He was then put into a car and driven to a police station. Once inside, he complained about his treatment, upon which the police officers made him kneel down, with his hands handcuffed, and once again kicked him. Only then was he asked to show his identification papers. In the meantime the suspected drugs dealer arrested with him had also exonerated him. In spite of this the police kept him in detention and did not allow him to see a doctor until much later. He was also not permitted to telephone his wife. He was then transferred, still handcuffed, to hospital where he was diagnosed and a little while later released from custody.

X-rays revealed that Emad Faltas had suffered three broken ribs. A medical examination further established that he had suffered bruising to his left temple, a cut above his left eye of 5 cm long, bruising to his left eye and minor bruising to his neck, left arm and stomach.

Emad Faltas had to stay in hospital for a full week. On Thursday, 22 June 1995, after his wife had protested about the ill-treatment of her husband, two senior police officials apologized to Emad Faltas. The Police Inspector's Office (*Kriminalbeamteninspektorat*) has started an investigation into the alleged ill-treatment. Meanwhile, Emad Faltas himself has been accused of resisting arrest.

Amnesty International is concerned that police officers may have used unwarranted and disproportionate force against Emad Faltas and is urging the Austrian authorities to investigate this case thoroughly, speedily and impartially, to bring to justice anyone found guilty of ill-treating him, and to compensate him for the injuries he suffered.